

PACOM's Regional Maritime Security Initiative (RMSI) Remarks

Secure waterways are vital to peace and prosperity in the Asia-Pacific region. The seas provide trade, communication, and access to vital economic resources. One-third of the world's shipping and half of its oil pass through the straits of Southeast Asia. The seas, like the resources that flow through them, must be both shared and protected.

But we don't have a clear view of the sea space. Due to economic globalization and continued transnational criminal exploitation, the risks are much higher than even a few short years ago. The view of the maritime domain must span the entire continuum...from port, to territorial waters, to international seas. Some ongoing efforts help, for example the International Maritime Organization's Ship and Port Facility Security Code, but more could and should be done.

Transnational threats like terrorism, maritime piracy, illegal trafficking (i.e., narcotics, human, and illicit cargo) and other criminal activities threaten maritime security in the Asia-Pacific region. These threats exploit the maritime environment, which permits ease and anonymity of movement. Unsecured or ungoverned seas provide potential havens for criminal or terrorist activity. Thousands of miles of coastline, sometimes uninhabited, are difficult to govern. No nation alone can provide for its own security, yet every nation has something to contribute to regional security.

The Regional Maritime Security Initiative (RMSI) provides a way ahead. The goal is to develop a partnership of willing nations who work together to identify, monitor, and intercept transnational maritime threats under international and domestic law. This cooperative effort will maximize the application of available resources so that each participating nation has timely information and the capability needed to act against maritime threats in its own territorial seas and contribute to regional maritime security efforts. Information sharing will contribute to the security of international seas, creating an environment hostile to terrorism and other criminal activities. RMSI activities in international waters will be in accordance with international law. The ultimate decision to participate in maritime security activities, including information sharing with other states or acting against a threat, remains *voluntary and sovereign* for each nation. This initiative will leverage technology to build and share a clear picture of the maritime environment, emulating our current picture of international airspace.

Some common elements of maritime security are:

Increased situational awareness and information sharing, fused information, shared among governments, that will facilitate border security and cue effective responses to maritime threats.

Responsive decision-making architectures that will use standardized procedures to support timely responses and cooperation against emerging threats.

Enhanced maritime interception capacity that will facilitate each nation taking effective action, as it deems appropriate.

Agency, ministerial and international cooperation, under international and domestic laws, that is essential to synchronize all elements of regional capability.

RMSI is gaining momentum in the Asia-Pacific region. We are working with friends and allies in the region, both to clarify the intent and to explore existing technologies and best practices relevant to RMSI. Steps are underway to understand the resources we can leverage today. Conferences and consultations with willing partners are taking place throughout the region.